



A Sharper Focus for the New York Academy of Medicine and Its Journal

JEREMIAH A. BARONDESS, M.D.

President, The New York Academy of Medicine

The New York Academy of Medicine, as many readers of the *Bulletin* know, is a venerable, 146 years old this year. The Academy has a long history of productiveness in many areas chiefly addressing issues in the continuing education of physicians, in public health, and in considerations at the interface of medicine and society. Since its inception, the Academy has viewed the preservation and management of medically useful information as a prime responsibility and, over the years, has assembled one of the largest privately held medical libraries in the United States.

During the past four decades of medical progress in this country, our energies have focused largely on progress in biomedical science, on the growth of understanding of disease mechanisms, and on the development of numerous derivative technologies, both diagnostic and therapeutic. At the same time, important changes in the disease and disability pattern have emerged; to a substantial degree, these changes have been determined by social and economic factors in our society. Nowhere are these changes more obvious or more concentrated than in our cities. For example, the emergence of parallel epidemics of substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and tuberculosis, as well as violence underscores the significance of key factors such

as urban poverty, family disintegration, racial bias, and crowding in shaping the new pattern of urban morbidities.

For these reasons it is appropriate for the New York Academy of Medicine to focus on urban health in carrying out its wish to be useful in the examination of consequential problems relating to public health. This process and the attendant programs are facilitated by the fact that the Academy is located in the largest urban health laboratory in the country. At the same time, the relevant issues are certainly not unique to New York City, nor to any other city in the country; our problems, therefore, lend themselves to examination not only on an urban basis, but on an interurban one as well.

As an expression of this focus, in the past two years the Academy has undertaken programs examining the structure and functioning of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, investigating the health of the biomedical research enterprise in this city, and studying the relationship between pediatric poverty and health. Many activities relevant to the HIV/AIDS research and clinical care communities have been undertaken, and activities related to the outbreak of tuberculosis have been conducted in cooperation with the New York City Department of Health.

Efforts to construct a center for the study of the epidemiology of urban morbidities, an Urban Health Corps for students in health professional schools, and programs to demonstrate the possibilities and characteristics of health careers to inner-city high school students are in various stages of planning.

All these considerations and activities have led to the view that the *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* could, with great benefit, be focused primarily on issues in urban health, and that in doing so it would fill a genuine niche in the literature. Accordingly, the Board of Trustees has voted to do so; the first issue of this old-but-new journal is this one.

As reflected in a new, nationally drawn editorial board and in some of the considerations already outlined, we hope that the *Bulletin* will develop into a national journal devoted primarily to consideration of issues in urban health. Our new editor, Dr. Robert J. Haggerty, brings great distinction and a varied background in bio-

medicine and health to this exciting new enterprise. All of us at the Academy are confident that this effort will be a significant force in the emergence of urban health as a defined field of inquiry and effort.